



AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND CHILD CARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

November 9, 2021 – Meeting Presentation



NEW WESTMINSTER



Agenda

November 9, 2021 - Meeting Presentation

Housing and Other:

Arts Empowerment Initiative - Claudia (25 min)

Homelessness Action Strategy- Anur (25 Min)

Crisis Amendment Bylaw Update- Claudia (15 Min)

Additional Housing Issue Identification

Child Care:

School Age Child Care in Queensborough- Anur Mehdic (15 min)

Additional Child Care Issue Identification





Arts Empowerment Initiative



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Arts Empowerment Initiative

Photovoice Project

The City realized a grant through the Community Poverty Reduction Committee, and in collaboration with Douglas College for an arts empowerment initiative.

The project, through photography and storytelling, will highlight the importance of home, belonging and community, and culminate in a virtual and mobile exhibit. The exhibit will facilitate a dialogue about the transformative nature of affordable housing, and address misconceptions and stereotypes about those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness.

Arts Empowerment Initiative

Photovoice Project

The City is in the process of contracting an Artist Mentor with experience in photography and knowledge of photovoice who will work closely with the affordable housing providers and City staff.

This opportunity will be open to up to five tenants from each of the following affordable housing developments, to a maximum of 15 participants:

- Mazarine Lodge (Queensborough)
- 43 Hastings Street
- Lookout Housing and Health Society (Rhoda Kaellis, Cliff Block, Russel)

Arts Empowerment Initiative

Background

Poverty and homelessness continue to be pervasive issues in New Westminster, and have been aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The City is taking an active role in addressing these and other social issues. The City is also partnering with the senior levels of government to realize new affordable housing, which, when combined with supports, lifts people out of poverty and homelessness.

While affordable housing is transformative, it is also potentially contentious. Recently, the Aboriginal Land Trust Society went through a development approvals process for an affordable housing development with 96 units for Indigenous and Swahili community members. While Council approved the application, there was widespread neighbourhood opposition, with some of the feedback being discriminatory and racist.

Arts Empowerment Initiative

Background

The City is embarking on two new affordable housing developments – i.e., one with 52 modular supportive housing units for men and women experiencing homelessness and one with 58 non-market housing unit for Indigenous community members. The City is also embarking on a five-year plan to realize 238 affordable units on an annual basis.

As part of the Affordable Housing and Child Care Task Force, member Councillors have called for a larger, more compassionate and not project specific dialogue regarding the need for affordable housing. The goal is to generate discussion of housing issues at a general level outside the context of specific engagement processes related to the approval of particular sites with strict timelines. Such a dialogue will address the transformative nature of affordable housing and tackle misconceptions and stereotypes regarding those living in poverty and experiencing homelessness, and generate compassion and empathy in the community for such housing.

Arts Empowerment Initiative

Central Themes

This project will build on and reference the innovative work being undertaken by Dr. Elliot Rossiter, Philosophy and Humanities, Douglas College, and titled 'Changing the Conversation.'

It will be intended to elicit greater community support for future affordable housing developments by documenting the transformative nature for tenants of such developments, and through photography and storytelling, facilitate understanding, compassion, empathy and acceptance among community members.

We want to hear from you...

Are there other innovative ideas for expanding and changing the dialogue around affordable housing, living in poverty, and experiencing homelessness that we may want to explore in New Westminster?

Are there examples that you have seen or heard about in other city's?



Homelessness Action Strategy



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Homelessness in New Westminster

- Between 2002 and 2008, the unsheltered homeless population increased by 118%.
- In 2006, the City developed a Homelessness Needs Assessment and Action Strategy, and established a Homelessness Coalition.
- Starting in 2008, the City worked with BC Housing and the Coalition to develop 28 emergency shelter beds and 84 transitional and supportive housing units.
- Between 2008 and 2017, the unsheltered homeless population decreased by 58%.
- Homelessness Coalition became a Society in 2012, and develop several action plans to guide its activities over the next five-to-seven year period.
- In 2019, City and Coalition commenced work on new Homelessness Needs Assessment.

Facing a Crisis

The March 2020 Homeless Count enumerated 52 unsheltered and 71 sheltered homeless people in New Westminster.

As with all homeless counts, this is likely a significant undercount of the true extent of unsheltered homelessness.

In September 2021, service providers with a mandate to address homelessness estimated the size of the unsheltered homeless population at three to four times the pre-pandemic number.

Facing a Crisis

Contributing factors include:

- the closure of tent cities in other municipalities (e.g., Crab and Oppenheimer Parks);
- the reduction in shelter capacity due to physical distancing requirements;
- the impacts of the pandemic, including employment and income disruption, which are contributing to mental health and substance misuse issues; and,
- the reluctance on behalf of family members and friends to accommodate people on a temporary basis given fears of virus transmission.

Facing a Crisis

The increase in homelessness is stressing faith-based and non-profit organizations; taxing City staff, and contributing to business and resident complaints, particularly in the Downtown.

The City has found that enforcement action only shifts the issue from one area to another. Additionally, recent court cases and challenges limit the ability of Police and Bylaw Enforcement to act when it comes to social issues such as homelessness.

Taking Action

In response to this increase in unsheltered homelessness, the City has taken a number of actions, including:

- established a COVID-19 At-Risk and Vulnerable Populations Task Force, which has received \$365,000 in City funding and \$874,323 in foundation and senior government funding to address the essential needs of the food insecure and unsheltered;
- established an Inter-Departmental Working Group on Homelessness to address business and resident complaints related to homelessness and other social issues; and,
- working with BC Housing and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to develop an additional up to 50 emergency shelter mats or beds and 52 new supportive housing units at 68 Sixth Street.

Taking Action

On October 18, 2021, Council received a report entitled '**Downtown Liveability Initiatives**,' which outlined 24 immediate and short-term actions categorized as follows:

- Improve general cleanliness and provide 24-hour public toilets.
- Enhance homeless outreach and augment emergency shelter capacity.
- Respond to the Opioid Epidemic.
- Work with Fraser Health to address mental health issues.
- Support and engage local businesses.

Committee Feedback

1. What are your observations with regard to the homelessness situation in New Westminster?
2. What factors do you believe are contributing to the increase in homelessness in New Westminster?



Homelessness Action Strategy

Purpose and Key Objectives

The Homelessness Action Strategy will provide a vision and plan for addressing homelessness and related issues for the next five years.

The strategy, and the needs assessment in which it is based, will:

- empower and engage people with lived and living experience in homelessness;
- identify needs and gaps, and inform actions and interventions;
- assist the City, and the faith-based and non-profit sector, in applying for foundation and senior government funding and grants;
- facilitate collaboration and partnership building; and,
- prioritize actions, and inform advocacy, including with the senior levels of government.



Homelessness Action Strategy

Key Partners

The strategy will be done in-house and with the assistance of the:

- Homelessness Coalition Society (The Homelessness Coalition)
- Community Action Network (CAN Leaders)
- UBC School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP Students)

Homelessness Action Strategy

Working Group

- Representation from the City, including Community Planning, Integrated Services and Police.
- Representation from the Homelessness Coalition, CAN and SCARP.
- Representation from organizations mandated to address homelessness related to Indigenous peoples, newcomers, seniors, youth, and women, including those fleeing abuse.
- Representation from business and resident interests.
- Representation from faith-based and non-profit organizations.
- Representation from health focused organizations.

Homelessness Action Strategy

Three Phases and Proposed Timeline

The strategy will have the following three phases:

- **Phase 1:** Information Gathering, including case study research and engagement (October to December 2021)
- **Phase 2:** Vision and Strategy Development, including defining a desired role for the City, the Coalition, and the senior levels of government (January to March 2022)
- **Phase 3:** Presentation, Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation (April 2022 to March 2027)

We want to hear from you...

1. Are you in general agreement with the proposed approach?
2. Are there perspectives or voices that are missing?
3. Are there any other innovative ideas in other municipalities that we may want to explore in New Westminster?

Questions?



Crisis Amendment Bylaw Update



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Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

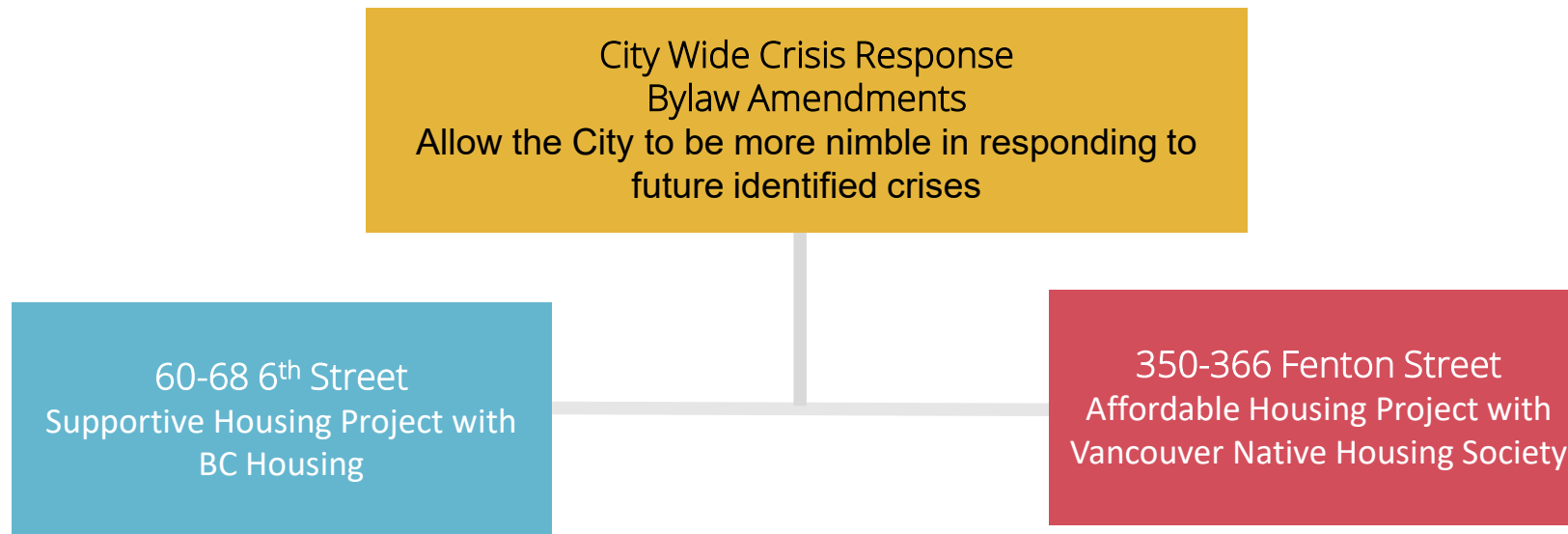
Project Intent

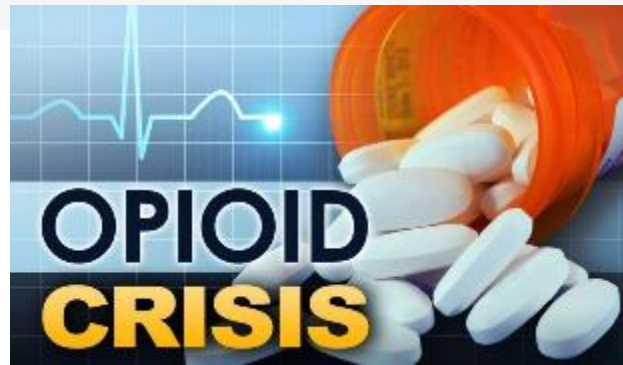
The City of New Westminster is bundling three separate, but closely related, projects into one review and consultation process in the interest of moving quickly to meet current and near-future funding deadlines, as well as respond more readily to urgent needs in the community.

The intent of these amendments is to enable urgent and time-sensitive needs relating to the pandemic, recent fires and heat waves, the Provincial Opioid Crisis, and the Regional Homelessness Crisis – and any other future crises – to be met more readily by successful adoption of bylaw amendments.

Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

These three projects include:





Background

- Provincial State of Emergency Declarations
- BC Public Health Emergency Declarations
- Regional Crises such as Homelessness Crisis
- CMHC and Provincial Funding Opportunities - Rapid Housing Initiative
- 2019 – 2022 City Council Strategic Plan

Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

Background

Responding to time-sensitive social, physical and health needs

Related to addressing urgent crises:

- **Provincial emergency declarations** (Pandemic, Fire, Flood, Heat Wave, Opioid Overdose Emergency, etc.)
- **Regionally Recognized Crises** (Extreme Weather Events, Homelessness Crisis)

Additional conditions/criteria

Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

Additional Criteria for Permitted Projects

1. Must be government-owned or under long-term lease;
2. Must be government agency funded; and
3. Must be operated by registered non-profit society or public agency.

All projects would also be subject to Council approval, controls and conditions.



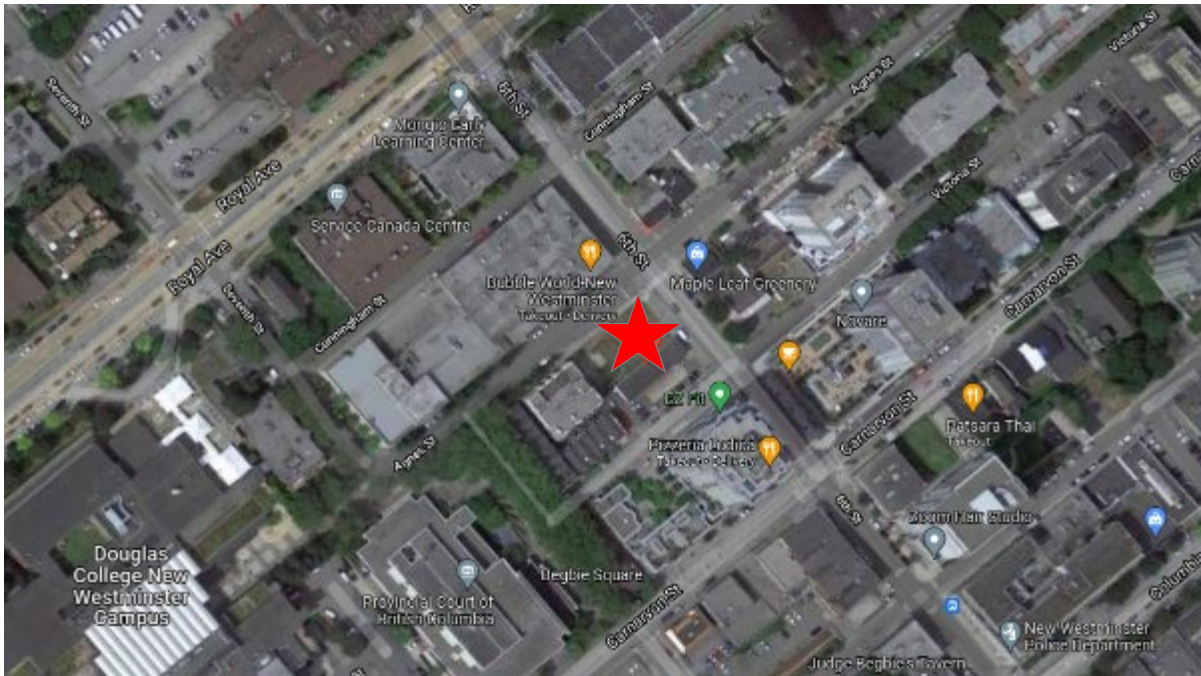
Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

What about “Social Benefit Land Uses” that do not meet those criteria?

- Broad multi-year public policy and engagement project is proposed
- Examining land uses that generate significant public benefit
- Council referred this to the 2022 Budget Review Process

Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

60 – 68 Sixth Street Supportive Housing



Proposed Housing

- Province owned land- BC Housing
- Approx. 52-units of modular homes with supports
- Staffed 24/7
- Experienced operator to be selected later this fall
- Estimated completion: late 2022

Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

What Supports are Typically Available?



Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

Small Sites Affordable Housing Program

October 2019 Council support in principle for

- 350 to 362 Fenton St. (Queensborough)
- 2035 London & 2038 Ninth (Connaught Heights) - subsequently excluded, July 2021

350 - 366 Fenton Street

- Partnership between Vancouver Native Housing Society & City
- City-Owned Land
- CMHC Funding - Capital
- BC Housing - Operating





Crisis Response Bylaw Amendments

350 - 366 Fenton Street

Vancouver Native Housing Society is working with the City of New Westminster to develop approximately 58 homes for Indigenous individuals and families in Queensborough.

- Proposed development includes three storeys of residential, above flood construction level
- Mix of studio, one and two-bedroom apartments
- Affordable Rental rates geared to tenant incomes
- Culturally-appropriate housing to meet the needs of New Westminster's and the region's growing urban Indigenous communities
- 20% fully accessible
- Energy-efficient construction

Process and Next Steps



We want to hear from you...

Questions or comments?

06-08-2021



Additional Issue Identification – Affordable Housing

Does the AHCC Committee have additional **affordable housing** issues to identify, which staff could present to the AHCC Task Force, or bring back to the AHCC Committee in 2022?





School Age Care in Queensborough



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School Age Care in Queensborough

- The COVID-19 Child Care Task Force has established a sub-committee, comprised of the City, the School District and Westminster Children's After School Society (WCAS), which is actively exploring options for new group school age care spaces in Queensborough.
- Between November 2020 and August 2021, there was a 80.7% increase in licensed child care spaces in Queensborough, compared to a 4.5% increase for the city-as-a-whole.
- Between November 2020 and August 2021, there was a 95.2% increase in group school age care spaces in Queensborough, compared to a 5.8% increase for the city-as-a-whole.

School Age Care in Queensborough

Sub-Area	Group - Under 36 months	Group - 30-60 Months	Group - School Age	All Other	Total
Downtown	96	224	130	50	500
East End	91	158	187	57	493
Queensborough	20	58	42	15	135
Uptown	204	407	226	174	1,011
West End	48	126	191	108	473
Total	459	973	776	404	2,612

November 2020

Sub-Area	Group - Under 36 months	Group - 30-60 Months	Group - School Age	All Other	Total
Downtown	96	224	130	50	500
East End	91	176	202	40	509
Queensborough	56	83	82	23	244
Uptown	212	411	216	164	1,003
West End	40	126	191	116	473
Total	495	1,020	821	393	2,729

August 2021

School Age Care in Queensborough

- WCAS, due to child care licensing regulation changes, has created an additional 16 group school age care spaces in Queensborough for a total of 88 group school age care spaces.
- Currently, WCAS has 162 children on its waitlist for its 88 group school age care spaces in Queensborough; however, only 59 children are eligible to currently attend their program (i.e., aged 5 to 12 years). 29 additional children are eligible to start in September 2022, with the remainder beyond September 2022.
- Another up to 25 group school age care spaces could be created at the Queensborough Community Centre, and potentially be operational by September 2022. Update will be provided in Spring 2022.



School Age Care in Queensborough

- The Parks and Recreation Department, based on a new recreation care category, is exploring a recreational-based program which could provide a flexible option for families with school age children. This program could be operational in Queensborough by September 2022. Update will be provided in Spring 2022.
- The Seamless Day Kindergarten pilot program has officially expanded to include SD 40. This is centered on the use of existing classrooms outside of school hours.
- City staff continue to work with the School District, WCAS and other non-profit child care providers to increase the supply of group school age care spaces in Queensborough.

We want to hear from you....

1. Does the Committee have ideas for City staff with regard to communicating the status of school age care in Queensborough?
2. Does the Committee see benefit in conducting a parent survey to get a greater understanding of the status of School Age Care City wide. If so, what are some important question to ask?

Additional Issue Identification – Affordable Child Care

Does the AHCC Committee have additional **affordable child care** issues to identify, which staff could present to the AHCC Task Force, or bring back to the AHCC Committee in 2022?



How will the Supportive Housing be Managed?



ABOUT VANCOUVER NATIVE HOUSING SOCIETY



**M'AKOLA
DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES**

Vancouver Native Housing Society (VNHS) is dedicated to providing safe, secure, affordable housing, principally for individuals and families of the urban Indigenous community. Since 2001, our reputation and experience have also inspired other mainstream housing providers to contract with us to manage and operate their properties for them.

VNHS works in partnership with municipal, federal and provincial government agencies to subsidize tenant rent contributions and achieve affordability for individuals and families with low incomes.

VNHS is a registered charity and non-profit society and is proudly governed by an all-Indigenous Board of Directors.